

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Favorable reconsideration of this application as presently amended and in light of the following discussion is respectfully requested.

Claims 8-26 are pending in the present application. Claims 1-7 are canceled without prejudice and Claims 8-26, which include subject matter from Claims 1-7, are added without adding new matter by the present amendment.

In the outstanding Office Action, the drawings were objected to; the specification was objected to; Claims 1-7 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph; and Claims 1-7 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as anticipated by Plemmons et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,205,115, herein "Plemmons").

Applicants thank the Examiner for the courtesy of an interview extended to Applicants' representative on February 2, 2004. During the interview, differences between the claims and the applied art were discussed. Further, new clarifying claims presenting the matter of the original claims were discussed. No agreement was reached pending the Examiner's further consideration of the new claims upon formal submission.

Regarding the Examiner's concern about Claim 13 expressed during the discussions of February 2, 2004, Applicants respectfully submit that new Claim 13 finds support in the specification at page 5, line 26, to page 6, line 29. In addition, Figure 4 shows compressing springs 28 that, for example, correspond to the claimed elastic connections.

Regarding the objection to the drawings, Figures 1-5 are amended as suggested in the outstanding Office Action to show various cross sections and without adding new matter. Formal drawings including those amendments are filed with this amendment. Accordingly, it is respectfully requested that this objection be withdrawn.

The Abstract and the Specification are amended as suggested in the outstanding Office Action and to substitute the term “rule” with the term “rod” which better describes the claimed invention. No new matter is believed to be added. Accordingly, it is respectfully requested that this objection be withdrawn.

Regarding the rejection of Claims 1-7 under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, Claims 1-7 have been canceled and new Claims 8-26 that better conform with U.S. claim drafting practice are presented. Accordingly, it is respectfully requested that this rejection be withdrawn.

Claims 1-7 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as anticipated by Plemmons. That rejection is respectfully traversed because Claims 1-7 have been canceled. However, Plemmons is discussed regarding new Claims 8-26.

New independent Claim 8 is directed to an assembly for ventilating a stator ring including branched pipes that have feed pipes, distributors, and a plurality of manifolds. The plurality of manifolds are adjacent to the stator ring and are provided with drilled holes for blowing gas out towards the stator ring. The distributors connect the feed pipes to the plurality of manifolds and the plurality of manifolds include pairs of half-shells. Each of the half-shells includes an end plate having an opening and a rim surrounding the end plate. The half-shells in each of the pairs are joined to each other at the rims. The distributors include ducts mounted between adjacent ones of the plurality of manifolds and at least one duct has open ends fitted into the openings of the end plates and also has abutment portions to the end plates.

In a non-limiting example, Figures 1 and 2 show the assembly 2 for ventilating the stator ring 1 having feed pipes 5, distributors 4, and a plurality of manifolds 3. The manifolds 3 are provided with drilled holes 12 and are made of pairs of half-shells 7 and 8. The half-

shells 7 and 8 have an end plate 9 having an opening 13 and a rim 10 surrounding the end plate 9. Further, Figure 2 shows that the half-shells 7 and 8 are assembled at the rims 10 and the distributors 4 include ducts 15 mounted between adjacent ones of the manifolds 3 and at least one duct has open ends fitted into openings 13 of the end plates 9 and abutment portions 19 on the end plates 9.

The claimed assembly has the advantage of being “easy to make” and “easy to assemble with the ring despite the complications that may arise due to differential thermal expansion at different times during the operation of the machine.”¹

The outstanding Office Action states at page 4, paragraph 9, that Plemmons discloses a “stator ring cooling assembly essentially as claimed.” However, Plemmons shows in Figure 4 that manifolds 44a, 46e, and 48a have an integral structure, i.e., made of one piece, and no drilled holes, contrary to independent Claim 8 that recites that the manifolds include pairs of half-shells, each of the half-shell having an end plate that includes an opening and a rim surrounding the end plate. In addition, as discussed during the interview, Plemmons does not teach or suggest distributors that include ducts mounted between adjacent ones of the plurality of manifolds and at least one duct having open ends fitted into openings of the end plates and abutment portions on the end plates, as required in independent Claim 8.

Plemmons discloses spacers between the manifolds that are merely closed clearances with side caps 53 and do not include open ends fitted into openings of end plates defined into the manifolds. The distributors in Plemmons mainly include a big cutout into the manifolds and a cover plate 61 as shown in Figure 4.

Further, the arrangement of Plemmons appears much more difficult to assemble without leaks and more exposed to damages due to a thermal expansion as it is rather stiff

¹ Original Specification, page 1, lines 23-29.

and bulky relative to the claimed device. Also, the arrangement of Figure 5 in Plemmons lacks the features of new Claim 8.

Accordingly, it is respectfully submitted that independent Claim 8 and each of the claims depending therefrom patentably distinguish over Plemmons.

New independent Claim 18 recites a plurality of manifolds having pairs of half-shells, each of the half-shells including an end plate and a rim, the end plate having an opening connected to at least a distributor, and pairs of half-shells being joined to each other at corresponding rims to form the plurality of manifolds. In addition, Claim 18 recites that the at least a distributor includes ducts mounted between adjacent ones of the plurality of manifolds, at least a duct has open ends fitted into the openings of the end plates and has abutment portions to the end plates.

These features find support in the disclosure as originally filed, for example at page 3, line 8, to page 4, line 28. The Plemmons patent does not teach nor suggest the above discussed features of independent Claim 18. Accordingly, Claims 18-26 are believed to be patentably distinct over the applied art.

Consequently, in light of the above discussion and in view of the present amendment, the present application is believed to be in condition for allowance and an early and favorable action to that effect is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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